

19 November 2001

Further information on UA 244/01 (AMR 23/099/2001, 25 September 2001) - Fear for safety/ Extrajudicial Executions

COLOMBIA Civilian population of the district of Frías, Falán municipality, in the north of Tolima Department

New names: Civilians living in the municipalities of Falán, Casabianca, Villa Hermosa and Palo Cabildo

Army-backed paramilitaries have threatened to attack four more municipalities in the north of Tolima Department. Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of civilians living in these municipalities.

Paramilitaries have reportedly been threatening to attack the four municipalities named above for several months. The Bloque Tolima of the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), United Self-defence Forces of Colombia, is reportedly planning to attack these municipalities before 28 November. Paramilitaries reportedly threatened the inhabitants, telling them to "*alistar acerca de 100 o 170 ataúdes, porque la lista es larga*" ("get 100 or 170 coffins ready because the death list is long"). Paramilitaries have carried out two massacres in Tolima department since September this year.

Army-backed paramilitary groups have a clear and permanent presence in the municipalities of the area despite the presence of the Patriots Battalion (*Batallón Patriótas*) of the army's VI Brigade. Members of this battalion reportedly told inhabitants of Frías on 16 September that the victims of the previous day's massacre were just a "bunch of military guerrilla fighters" (*una pila de guerrilleros milicianos*). They have also accused the civilian population of these municipalities of being guerrilla supporters. According to witnesses at least two members of this battalion have been seen participating in AUC operations.

Amnesty International is especially concerned for the safety of the civilian population in these areas because, despite previous international condemnation, the Colombian authorities have apparently taken no decisive action to confront the paramilitaries.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish, English or your own language:

- urging the authorities to do everything necessary to guarantee the safety of the civilian population of Falán, Casabianca, Villa Hermosa and Palo Cabildo, in the north of Tolima Department;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the reported paramilitary killing of 11 people in Frías on 15 September;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in northern Tolima department, urging that the results are made public and those found responsible for supporting and participating in such groups are brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and United Nations recommendations.

APPEALS TO:

President of Colombia

Señor Presidente Andrés Pastrana, Presidente de la República
Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No. 7-26, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: President Pastrana, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 44281 PALP CO

Faxes: + 57 1566 2071

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente / Dear President Pastrana

Minister of Defence

Dr. Gustavo Bell, Ministro de Defensa Nacional
Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, Avenida Eldorado, Carrera 52 OFI. 217
CAN

Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Ministro Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO

Faxes: + 57 1 222 0059

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

Governor of Tolima Department

Sr. Guillermo Alfonso Jaramillo Martínez
Gobernación de Tolima
Calle 10 y 11, Carrera 3
Ibagué, Tolima, COLOMBIA

Telegrams: Gobernador de Tolima, Tolima, Colombia

Fax: + 57 82 638588

Salutation: Dear Governor / Sr. Gobernador

COPIES TO:

Non-governmental Human Rights Organization

Sembrar

Apartado Aéreo 18621, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

and to diplomatic representatives of Colombia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 31 December 2001.